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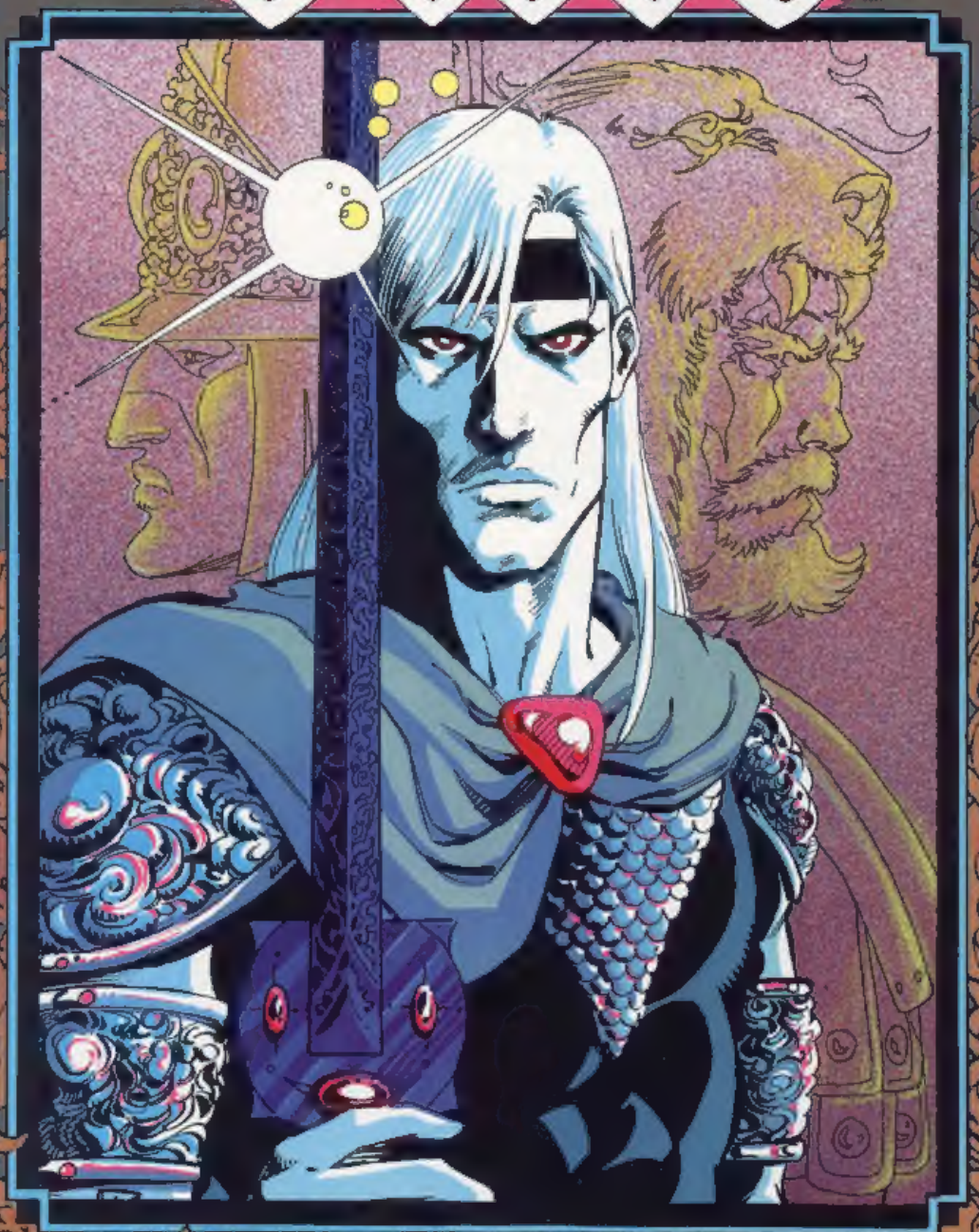
MICHAEL MOORCOCK'S

Elric

THE VANISHING TOWER



ROY THOMAS AND JAN DUURSEMA

WHO ARE THESE GUYS, ANYWAY?

For ten thousand years the sorcerer-kings of **Melniboné** had ruled the Bright Empire aided by pacts with the ancient gods of Chaos.

Last to sit on the Ruby Throne was the albino, **Elric**. Weak and sickly, kept alive by sorcery and drugs, he was unlike his inhuman subjects for he possessed a conscience, though he often chose not to heed it.

With his throne usurped by his mad cousin, **Yyrkoon**, and his beloved **Cymoril** placed in a sorcerous sleep, Elric was manipulated by the Chaos lord, **Arioch**, into claiming the runeblade **Stormbringer**. With the sword, Elric needed no longer fear his weakness, for Stormbringer drank souls and would share its stolen life with him. So for vengeance and love, Elric lead an armada against Melniboné. But fate betrayed him, for in destroying Yyrkoon he was also responsible, albeit unwillingly, for razing Imrryr and for Cymoril's death.

Now Elric — kinslayer, womanslayer and traitor — is a wanderer. Hated by his scattered subjects and feared by humans, his only companion is **Moonglum of Elwher.**

LAST ISSUE: Using sorcery, Elric protected the Tanelorn caravan from a raid led by his old enemy, **Theleb K'aarna** and Urish, the beggar-king. Wandering into the desert seeking relief from his melancholy, Elric has learned from **Myshella**, Empress of the Dawn, that Theleb now plans to attack **Tanelorn** itself...

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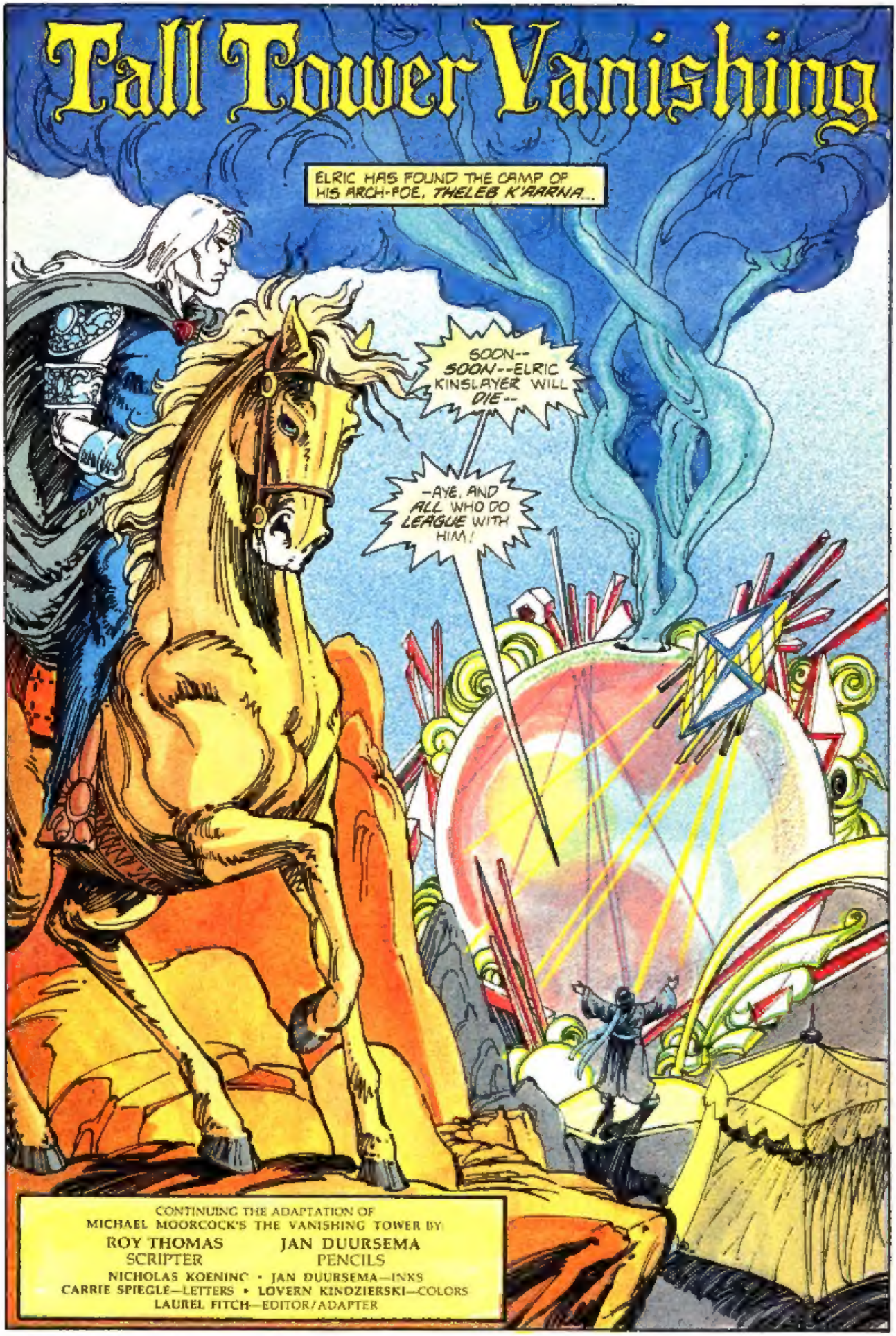
Tall Tower Vanishing


ELRIC HAS FOUND THE CAMP OF HIS ARCH-FOE, THELEB K'AARNA...
SOON--SOON--ELRIC KINSLAYER WILL DIE--
-AYE, AND ALL WHO DO LEAGUE WITH HIM!

CONTINUING THE ADAPTATION OF
MICHAEL MOORCOCK'S THE VANISHING TOWER BY:

ROY THOMAS — SCRIPTER
JAN DUURSEMA — PENCILS

NICHOLAS KOENING • JAN DUURSEMA—INKS
CARRIE SPIEGLE—LETTERS • LOVERN KINDZIERSKI—COLORS
LAUREL FITCH—EDITOR/ADAPTER

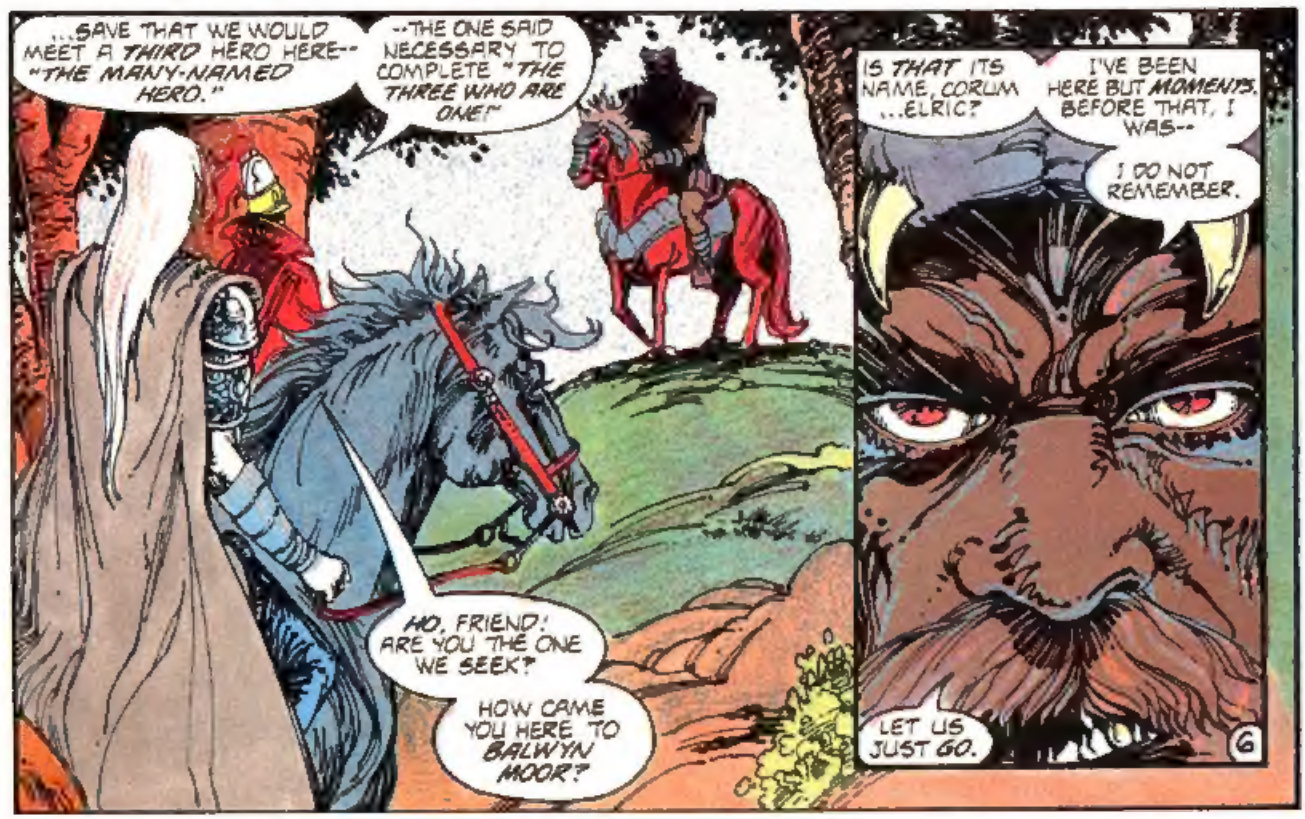
AH, THAT CURSED ALBINO WILL RUE THE DAY HE EARNED MY VENGEANCE!
AND WHEN HE IS DEAD, QUEEN YISHANA WILL REALIZE HER MISTAKE—AND GIVE HERSELF TO ME.
HOW COULD SHE LOVE THAT PALE ANACHRONISM MORE THAN A MAN OF THELEB K'AARNA'S TALENTS?
HOW?
WELL, NO MATTER! IT IS THE RUNES WHICH MATTER NOW--
--THE RUNES I TRACE UPON THE SPHERE OF THE PLANES, GIVEN ME BY THE LORDS OF CHAOS!
EASY, GOLDMANE! I MUST SEE WHAT THIS SORCERER PLANS.
A FEW MOMENTS MORE...
NOW! THE SPELL IS DONE!
COME, YE WHO LURK ON THE DARK SIDE!
HRO
COME!
2

HARRR
AH! I HAVE ACHIEVED IT--DESTROYED THE BARRIER BETWEEN THE PLANES--FOUND ALLIES ELRIC'S MAGIC CANNOT DESTROY--
--BECAUSE THEY DO NOT OBEY THE SORCEREOUS RULES OF THIS PLANE!
INVINCIBLE, INVULNERABLE ALLIES--WHO OBEY ONLY THELEB K'AARNA!
NOW, MY FRIENDS, WE SHALL MOVE AGAINST TANELORN--
--TANELORN, DOOMED CITY OF FOOLS!
I SAID BE STILL, HORSE! THOSE MONSTERS WON'T--
WHIRL
DAMN.
YOU!?
YOU ARE TOO LATE, PALE PRINCE!
NEVER TOO LATE, MAGICIAN--
MMMMMM
MMMMMMMMMMMM
3

--WHILE ELRIC LIVES!
STOP HIM, DOGS!
HE SEEKS TO DESTROY THE SPHERE WITH HIS HELLSWORD! HE--
MMMMMMMMMMMM
BY THE GODS--
--I PASSED RIGHT THROUGH THE DAMNED THING!
PARDON ME...
EH?
4

...BUT YOU ARE ELRIC OF MELNIBONÉ, ARE YOU NOT?
I AM. AND HAVE I YOU TO THANK FOR RESCUING ME FROM THE CREATURES CONJURED BY THELEB K'AARNA?
'TWAS INDEED I WHO SUMMONED YOU...
...BUT I KNOW OF NO "THELEB K'AARNA."
I WAS TOLD I HAD BUT ONE CHANCE TO ENLIST YOUR AID--BY COMING TO THIS PARTICULAR PLACE, AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME.
I AM CORUM JHAELEN IRSEI, AND I RIDE UPON A QUEST OF GRAVE IMPORT.
AS DID I... A MOMENT AGO.
YOUR NAME SEEMS... FAMILIAR, SOMEHOW. BUT WHAT FOREST IS THIS?
I DO NOT RECOGNIZE IT.
IT IS NOWHERE ON YOUR PLANE OR IN YOUR TIME, ELRIC.
I NEED YOUR AID IN MY BATTLE AGAINST THE LORDS OF CHAOS. ALREADY I HAVE HELPED SLAY ARIOCH AND XIOMBARGS, BUT--
WHAT? YOU SAY YOU DESTROYED ARIOCH? MY PATRON LORD?
HE IS YOUR PATRON ON ANOTHER PLANE, WHERE THE CHAOS LORDS ARE DOUBTLESS STRONGER. HERE, IT IS THE THIRD OF THE SWORD RULERS WHO THREATENS US NOW--
--THE MOST POWERFUL ONE--KING MABELODE!
I WAS RIDING TO SEEK HELP FROM A CITY CALLED TANELORN...
...WHEN I WAS TOLD THAT, IF SUMMONED, YOU MIGHT AID ME... AND IN SO DOING, AID YOURSELF.
AND WHO TOLD YOU THIS?
A WISE MAN.
5

I HAVE BEEN DRAWN AWAY AT AN INOPPORTUNE TIME, PRINCE CORUM. I PRAY YOU SPEAK THE TRUTH TO ME...
I DO. COME.
YOU SEE. MY GUIDE WAS TAKEN PRISONER. WE MUST RESCUE HIM FROM A CASTLE NEARBY BEFORE WE CAN CONTINUE ON TO TANELORN.
I, TOO, WISH TO REACH TANELORN, TO WARN THE CITY OF... SOMETHING. I WONDER IF IT IS THE SAME TANELORN.
I WONDER, TOO, WHY YOU AND I CAN UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S SPEECH.
I WAS INFORMED WE WOULD BE ABLE TO TO COMMUNICATE BECAUSE "WE ARE PART OF THE SAME THING."
AND THAT MEANS...?
DO NOT ASK ME TO EXPLAIN FURTHER, PRINCE ELRIC, FOR I KNOW NO MORE...

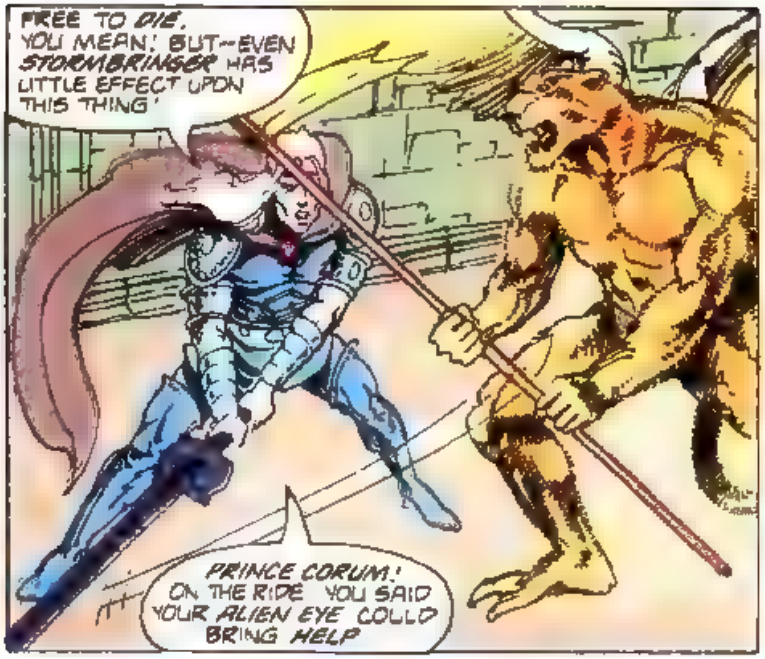

...SAVE THAT WE WOULD MEET A THIRD HERO HERE-- "THE MANY-NAMED HERO."
--THE ONE SAID NECESSARY TO COMPLETE "THE THREE WHO ARE ONE!"
HO, FRIEND! ARE YOU THE ONE WE SEEK?
HOW CAME YOU HERE TO BALWYN MOOR?
IS THAT ITS NAME, CORUM ...ELRIC?
I'VE BEEN HERE BUT MOMENTS. BEFORE THAT, I WAS--
I DO NOT REMEMBER.
LET US JUST GO.
6

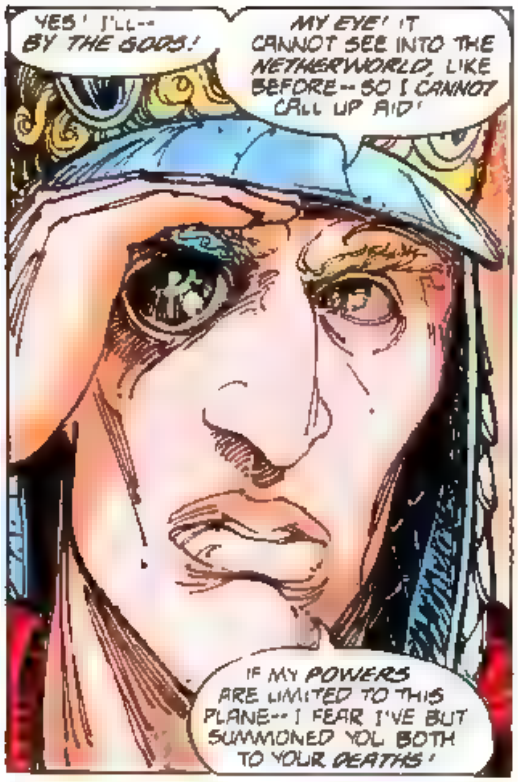
HOW DID YOU KNOW OUR NAMES, SIR?
BECAUSE I AM ELRIC... I AM CORUM...OR AT LEAST, I HAVE BEEN OR AM TO BE ELRIC AND CORUM.
AND YOUR NAME IS...?
A THOUSAND NAMES ARE MINE, A THOUSAND HEROES I HAVE BEEN... JOHN DAKER...URLIK... EREKOSË...YES, YOU MAY CALL ME EREKOSË.
I AM HE WHO HAS BEEN CALLED THE CHAMPION ETERNAL, DOOMED TO STRUGGLE FOREVER AND NEVER TO UNDERSTAND WHY.
MY HEAD-- IT POUNDS! WHO TORTURES ME SO? WHO?
SO EACH OF US IS ANOTHER INCARNATION OF THE OTHERS?
PERHAPS ONLY BECAUSE OUR STRENGTH MAY BE THUS TRIPLED THAT WE MAY HOPE TO DEFEAT VOILODION GHAGNASDIAK OF THE VANISHING TOWER!
IS THAT THE CASTLE WHERE YOUR GUIDE IS IMPRISONED?
AYE. IT EXISTS IN ANY PLANE, ANY DIMENSION, FOR ONLY A FEW MOMENTS AT A TIME.
BUT WE MUST FREE MY GUIDE, SO WE MAY JOURNEY ON TO TANELORN...
TANELORN?
I, TOO, SEEK THAT IMMORTAL CITY!
ONLY THERE MAY I DISCOVER SOME REMEDY TO MY DREADFUL FATE-- WHICH IS TO KNOW ALL PREVIOUS INCARNATIONS, AND TO BE HURLED AT RANDOM FROM ONE EXISTENCE TO THE OTHER.
THEN WE MUST FIND TANELORN, SO YOU CAN FORGET.
FORGET? YOU HAVE NO INKLING OF WHAT IT IS I MUST FORGET, ELRIC.
NOW, CORUM-- WHICH WAY TO THIS VANISHING TOWER?
7

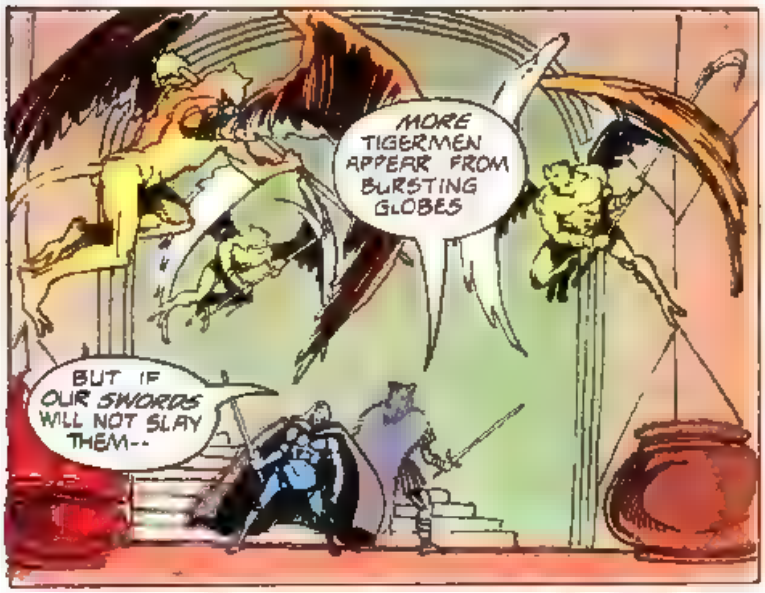
...PRINCE ELRIC? YOU'VE NOT SPOKEN FOR MILES.
I'M SORRY, CORUM. I WAS THINKING...THINKING OF THE UNIVERSE...OR THE MULTIVERSE, AS SOMEONE I KNOW HAS NAMED IT.
WHERE HAVE WE COME?
THIS IS DARKVALE... WHERE I AM TOLD THE TOWER WILL NEXT APPEAR.
I WAS ALSO TOLD THERE WAS ONCE A VILLAGE HEREABOUTS. AN UNINVITING SPOT, EH, BROTHERS?
I HAVE SEEN WORSE.
I TAKE IT THAT, WHEN AND IF THE TOWER REAPPEARS, WE ARE TO BE SET TO RUSH IT.
AND WHEN WILL IT APPEAR, PRINCE CORUM?
PERHAPS AN HOUR... PERHAPS AN EON. I CANNOT SAY.
WHAT LITTLE I KNOW, I LEARNED FROM A SORCERER WHO SERVES THE LORDS OF LAW--AS DO I MYSELF--
--FOR I AM A MORTAL DOOMED TO BATTLE CHAOS.
AS AM I.
AS AM I...
...THOUGH I AM LIKEWISE SWORN TO SERVE CHAOS.
8

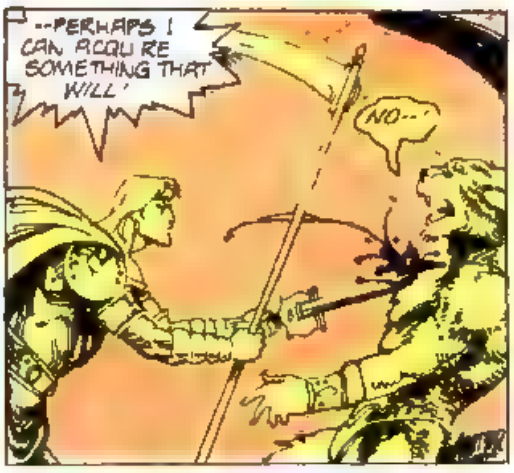
DAWN...
ELRIC--EREKOSE--HASTEN!
THE VANISHING TOWER IS HERE!
VO LODION GHAGNASDIAK KEEPS THE DOOR OPEN TO LURE IN "GUESTS." IT S OUR ONLY ADVANTAGE I SUSPECT
WHO IS TH S FOE WE SEEK-- AND HOW HE CAME TO DWELL IN SUCH A PLACE?
IT S SA D THIS TOWER ONCE WAS IN DISPUTE TWIXT LAW AND CHAOS. SO CHAOS DECREED THAT IT NEVER REMA N FOR LONG UPON THE SAME PLANE
AS TO TS CURRENT MASTER I KNOW ONLY THAT HE S SO DESPERATE FOR COMPANY THAT HE CAPTURES "COMPANIONS" WHOM HE SLAYS AS SOON AS THEY BORE HIM
AT LAST, I HAVE SOMEONE NEW TO RELIEVE MY ENNU
. BUT PUT DOWN YOUR SWORDS. I PRAY YOU, FOR YOU ARE TO BE MY GUESTS
VOILODION GHAGNASDIAK, I PRESUME?
THE SAME
KNOW YOU THIS: WE HAVE BEEN WRENCHED FROM OUR OWN AGES BY THE POWER OF THE GODS THEMSELVES, TO DEMAND THAT ONE JHARY-A-CONEL BE GIVEN UP TO US
GIVE HM UP TO US AND WE W LL NOT HARM YOU
9

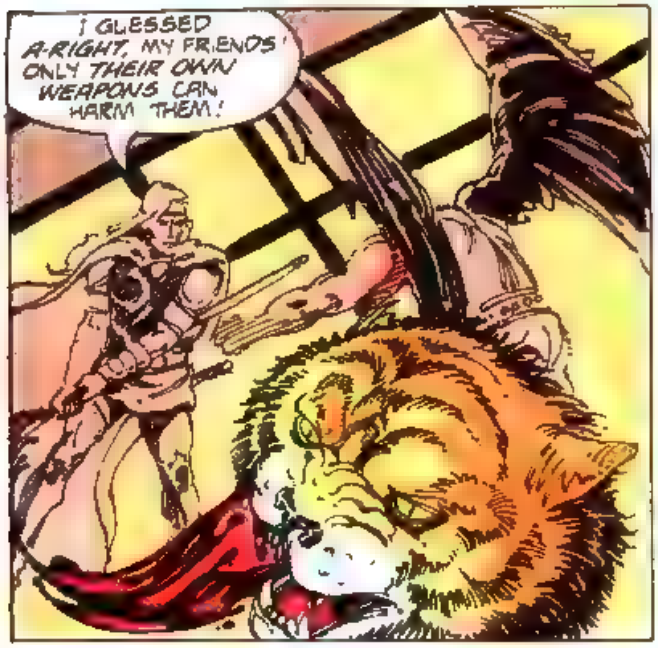
THIS JHARY IS A WITTY FELLOW I'D AGREE, BUT WHAT INTEREST COULD THE GODS HAVE IN HIM?
OH WELL, NO MATTER IN ANY EVENT I'VE NOT TIRED OF HIM YET...
..SO YOU'LL NOT HAVE HIM!
PMK
IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN A YELLOW GLOBE TO KEEP US FROM YOU, FELLOW.
AH, BUT T S DANGEROUS TO DESTROY THE GLOBES MY WHITE-HAIRED FRIEND
FOR WHAT IS WITHIN THEM WILL NOW DESTROY YOU!
I AM FREE!
AYE--FREE TO KILL THESE FOOLS WHO REJECT MY HOSPITALITY!
10


FREE TO DIE, YOU MEAN! BUT--EVEN STORMBRINGER HAS LITTLE EFFECT UPON THIS THING!
PRINCE CORUM! ON THE RIDE YOU SAID YOUR ALIEN EYE COULD BRING HELP


YES! I'LL-- BY THE GODS!
MY EYE! IT CANNOT SEE INTO THE NETHERWORLD, LIKE BEFORE--SO I CANNOT CALL UP AID!
IF MY POWERS ARE LIMITED TO THIS PLANE--I FEAR I'VE BUT SUMMONED YOU BOTH TO YOUR DEATHS!


MORE TIGERMEN APPEAR FROM BURSTING GLOBES
BUT IF OUR SWORDS WILL NOT SLAY THEM--


--PERHAPS I CAN ACQUIRE SOMETHING THAT WILL!
NO--!


I GUESSED A-RIGHT, MY FRIENDS! ONLY THEIR OWN WEAPONS CAN HARM THEM!

THAT IS GOOD TO KNOW ALBINO
FOR NOW THAT I'VE A GRIP ON THIS ONE'S SCYTHE--

FIRST NOTES

One thing you miss, being an editor locked up in an office in the basement all day is *personal* contact with the folks that buy and sell the books you publish. So every once in awhile we put on our dark sunglasses, full-length overcoats, and oversized, wide-brimmed fedoras and then lurch out into the daylight in a neurotic frenzy, thrusting newly printed magazines into the faces of unsuspecting passers by and asking them poignant questions like, "So what do you think, huh?"

This approach most commonly elicits a lusty scream of terror and the occasional punch in the mouth, leading the less experienced editor to believe that there is something *wrong* with the material. But old pros — those with two or three weeks experience — know that it is merely the result of inappropriate *sampling* techniques. Because most people have an *attitude* problem when it comes to comic books and would most likely scream if they simply saw a comic book lying innocently on the pavement — or sock the nearest unsuspecting passer-by.

So the old pro heads to the nearest comic book convention — where he thrusts books into the faces of unsuspecting *comic book fans* and asks poignant questions like, "So what do you think, huh?"

And armed with the delusion that things were looking pretty good these days — with **Howard Chaykin's American Flagg!**, the new **Sable** series written by **Marv Wolfman**, our prestige format **Crossroads** limited series, new artist **Spyder** on **Whisper**, and the continued critical success of books like **Badger** and **Nexus** — I boldly entered a modest comics convention and lurched about in a neurotic frenzy asking rhetorical questions like, "Pretty good, huh?"

But comics fans are not easily swayed by cheap rhetoric, especially comics fans who are also comics *retailers*, and one particularly astute shop owner cut me off before I could start and said, "You know, your whole line has really gone downhill recently."

I lifted my fedora slightly, peered over the top of my sunglasses and said, "What do you mean?"

"Well," he responded, "American Flagg! just isn't the same without Chaykin."

"But he's back now. Have you seen the sample pages from the first issue of **Howard Chaykin's American Flagg!** that are in the preview package which I can't help but notice you are holding in your hands right now?" I countered.

"Well, no," he admitted, "but that's not what I mean. I mean, look at Jon Sable, Freelance. It's just not the same since Grell left."

"But what about the new **Sable** series by **Marv Wolfman** and **Bill Jaaska** and the ABC prime time network Sable television series? Have you seen the show or looked at the sample pages that are in the preview package which I can't help but notice your are holding in your hands right now?" pained.

"Well, no," he responded. "But that's not what I mean. I mean, look at Badger, it's really gone downhill. It's just not the same since Jeffrey Butler left."

"Say *what*? **Badger** is one of our consistently best-selling titles, **Bill Reinhold** did some spectacular work on the book; **Mike Baron's** writing is top-notch; and **Ron Lim** just signed on to draw the next twelve issues." I thrusted. "How are your sales on **Badger**?"

"Well, they're rising," he admitted. "But that's not what I mean. I mean, look at Dreadstar. This new artist can't draw at all."

"Yeah? Well, do you like DC's *Suicide Squad*?"

"Oh sure, it's great."

"Well, it's the same artist!" I stabbed. "And **Luke McDonnell** was **Jim Starlin's** personal choice to take over **Dreadstar** and Jim thinks the book looks great!" I bludgeoned.

"But my sales are way down," he countered. "It doesn't matter if I like the art, if my customers don't like it."

"A minute ago you were complaining about **Badger**, even though your sales were up!" I shouted. "Make up your mind!"

"It's just that I don't like the art on Dreadstar," he complained. "Why can't you get Starlin to draw the book? It seems like you're losing all your best talent to other companies."

"Name me one company for which Jim Starlin *is* drawing a book!" I screamed. "And who have we 'lost'? We've *gained* **Marv Wolfman** on **Sable**, **Howard Chaykin's** back on **American Flagg!**, **Mike Baron** and **Steve Rude** are still on **Nexus**, **Bill Reinhold** drew **Badger** for over 25 issues and only 'left' to draw the Badger graphic novel, **Hexbreaker** (on sale next month!), and his replacement **Ron Lim**, is one of the hottest new artists around; **Frank Miller** and **Lynn Varley** are still doing covers for **Lone Wolf and Cub**, and we've lined up **Bill Sienkiewicz** to take over when they take a break."

"Oh, I don't like Sienkiewicz' art at all, either. It's too confusing," he proclaimed. "And his stuff doesn't sell." He hastened to add.

"Your kidding, right?" I screeched. "Look, I'm sorry you don't like **Luke McDonnell's** art. But we think it's pretty damn good, and maybe, just *maybe*, you aren't willing to like it because it's simply *not* Starlin. And maybe, just maybe, your perception of our entire line of books is slightly discolored by your dissatisfaction with *one* of them!"

"It just seems to me your books used to be much better," he persisted.

"What else do you want from us?" I croaked hoarsely.

"Well, if you could just get Starlin to draw Dreadstar again..."

And then I killed him. From now on, I think I'll stay in the nice, cozy basement.

— Rick Oliver

FIRST IN FEBRUARY

Lone Wolf and Cub #10: Ogami helps two children regain their family honor. By **Kazuo Koike** and **Goseki Kojima**. Cover and introduction by **Frank Miller**. 64 pages. Perfect bound. Black-and-white. $2.50. Note: Contains brief nudity.

Badger #36: A big bad wolf, a big bad bully, some big bad blades, and a totally crazed Badger in the legend of the "Dire Wolf." By **Mike Baron** and **Ron Lim**. Cover by **Mike Zeck**. $1.75.

Nexus #45: Nexus, Judah and Badger return to the bowl-shaped world on a mission to save the solar system. The beginning of a special six-part crossover. By **Mike Baron** and **Steve Rude**. $1.75.

Grimjack #47: The secret behind the powers of Lord Phaelon are revealed, and a new Protector is created to defend Cynosure against the Dancer's Demons. By **John Ostrander** and **Tom Mandrake**. Plus **Ted McKeever** and **Eddy Current** visit Munden's Bar! $1.75.

Psychoblast #8: Anomaly is put on ice, D.S.X. Machina buries the New Order, and Psychoblast becomes a casualty of "Dedric's War." By **Steven Grant**, **Robb Phipps** and **Al Vey**. $1.75.

Whisper #13: Now monthly! An old acquaintance asks Diane to protect a battered woman fleeing from "The Wild, the Beautiful, and the Damned." By **Steven Grant** and new artist **Spyder**. $1.75.

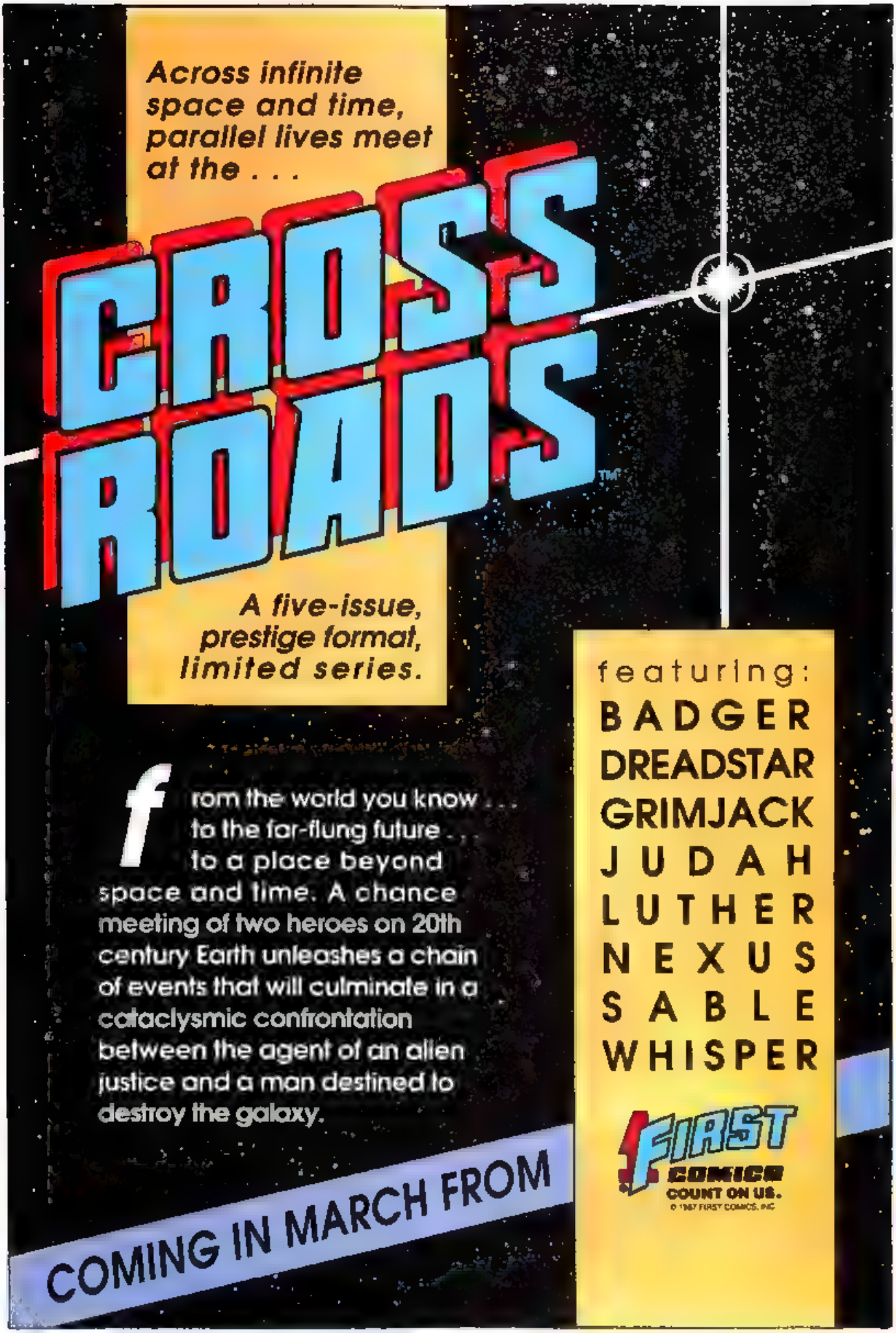
Howard Chaykin's American Flagg! #2: Arriving in Berlin with the Skullcrushers, Reuben promptly gets himself framed and placed under arrest. By **Howard Chaykin**, **Mindy Newell**, **Mike Vosburg**, **Richard Ory**, **John Moore**, **Tony Van de Walle** and **Ken Bruzenak**. $1.75.

Starslayer: The Log of the Jolly Roger: Join Tom MacQuillon and the crew of the Jolly Roger on their centuries-spanning epic. Now complete in one deluxe all-color volume. Written and illustrated by **Mike Grell**. 160 pages. $9.95.

Elric: The Vanishing Tower #6: The "Three Who Are One" meet as Elric, Corum and Erekose combine forces to do battle in the Vanishing Tower. By **Roy Thomas**, **Jan Duursema**, and **Nicholas Koenig**. Bi-monthly series. $1.75.

Hawkmoon: The Runestaff #1: Hawkmoon reaches the fabled city of the Runestaff as the fourth book in the saga of Dorian Hawkmoon begins. By **Roger Sallick** and **Rafael Kayanan**. Bi-monthly series. $1.75.

Sable #4: An old enemy of Sable's is out for revenge, and a woman from Jon's past is out to make her own reputation as a manhunter. By **Marv Wolfman**, **Bill Jaaska** and **Ralph Cabrera**. $1.75.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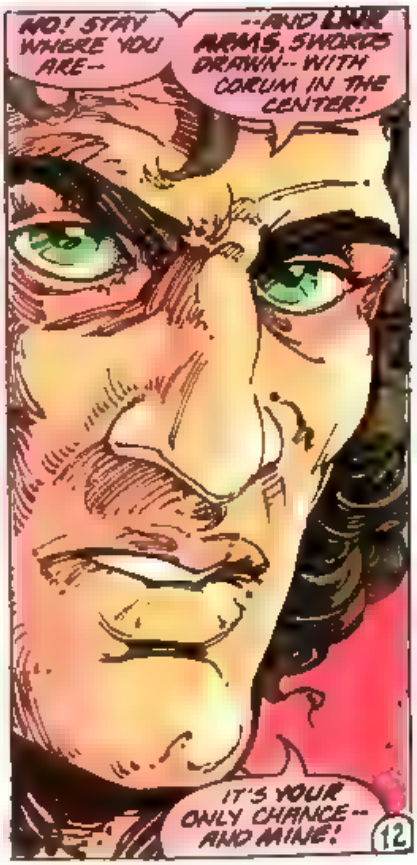
--I WILL KNOW JUST WHAT TO DO WITH IT!
SWISH

SO MUCH FOR THOSE--BUT FOR EACH ONE THAT FALLS, MORE SPRING UP TO TAKE ITS PLACE!
AND--WITH MY BLADE'S POWER SO WEAK HERE--I'VE BARELY STRENGTH TO LIFT IT
LEAN ON ME ELRIC. 'TIS THE LEAST I CAN--
AAAAAH
WHAT THE DEVIL--?

THERE, CORUM. IT'S OUR "HOST"! SOME SMALL STRANGE ANIMAL HAS ATTACKED HIM!
FEFF
GET IT OFF ME--P-PLEASE--GET IT OFF!

THAT IS MY CAT, WHISKERS, GENTLEMEN IT DOES NOT CARE FOR THE LITTLE MAN
JHARY! THANK THE GODS STAY THERE AND WE'LL--


NO! STAY WHERE YOU ARE--
--AND LINK ARMS, SWORDS DRAWN--WITH CORUM IN THE CENTER!
IT'S YOUR ONLY CHANCE--AND MINE!

WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR GUIDE, MAN? DOESN'T HE WANT TO BE RESCUED?
HE IS WISE, EREKOSË, BEST DO WHAT HE SAYS!

I THINK YOU ARE RIGHT, CORUM. ALREADY MY VITALITY RETURNS TO ME!
TIS ALMOST AS IF, THUS LINKED WE HAVE BECOME ONE ENTITY!
AYE--

--AND EACH WITH THE POWER OF ALL THREE!
AND IF WE DO--

--THEN LET US USE IT!
ARRR

N-NO! THE TOWER--
THIS WILL DESTROY THE TOWER!
13

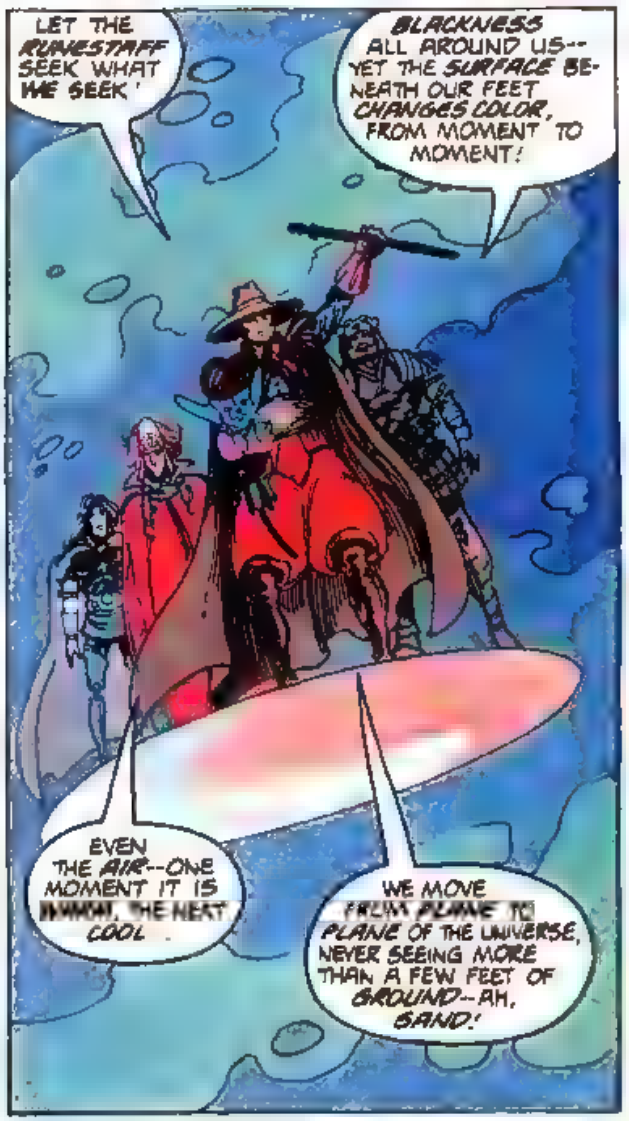
HE IS RIGHT! THE TOWER SWAYS WILDLY, LIKE A STORM-TOSSED SHIP!
BUT THAT MEANS—IT IS IN LIMBO ONCE MORE—BETWEEN PLANES!
RRUMMMBBLL
AYE, PRINCE CORUM THE SORCERY WE HAVE WORKED TODAY MUST HAVE ITS EFFECT, I FEAR
THOUGH VOILODYON GHASHASDIAK WILL NEVER SEE IT
BUT IF THE TOWER DIES, WILL NOT WE DIE WITH IT?
A POSS BILITY, FRIEND ELRIC OH YES, I KNOW YOU ALL
BUT COME.. HELP ME SEEK MY HAT
TRUST ME
AT SUCH A TIME, YOU LOOK FOR A—HAT!?
TH S IS VO LODION S VAULT HERE YOU WILL FIND ALL THE THINGS YOU SEEK
HERE, TOO I HOPE TO FIND MY HAT--
--IF YOU'LL BE LINK ARMS AGAIN, AND PRINCE CORUM STRIKE THE DOOR WITH HIS FOOT
14

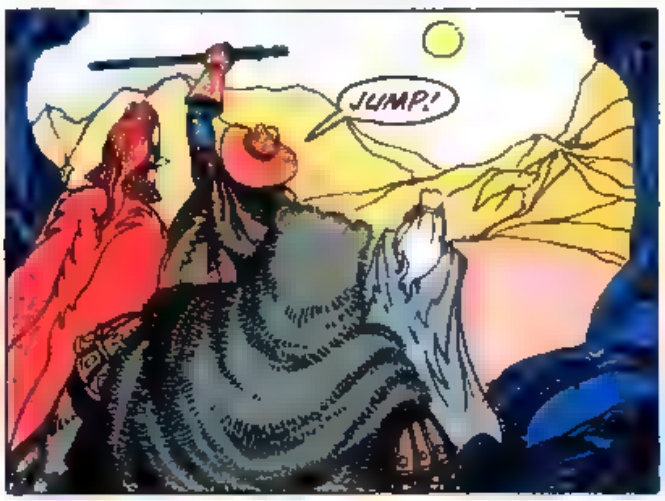
JUST-- KICK IT? BUT THAT DOOR IS MADE OF STEEL...
STILL WE MAY AS WELL DO AS HE SAYS--
--WHILE WE CAN STILL STAND!
WHOOM
IT FELL--AS IF MADE OF THE FLIMSIEST WOOD!
OF COURSE
AND THESE ARE--WERE-- VO LODION @HAGNASDIAK'S TREASURES!
ONCE THE POSSESSIONS OF THOSE HE CHOSE TO CALL HIS "GUESTS"!
THOSE, PRINCE ELRIC, ARE WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO HELP YOUR PRECIOUS TANELORN
WHAT IS INSIDE THIS BUNDLE?
THE BANNERS OF BRONZE --AND THE ARROWS OF QUARTZ
EFFECTIVE WEAPONS AGAINST THE REPTILIAN MEN OF PIO AND THEIR MOUNTS.
HOW DID YOU KNOW OF--?
AH, HERE'S MY HAT
IT WAS SPECIALLY MADE, YOU KNOW.
WHY HAVE YOU HANDED ME THIS GOBLET?
TAKE IT IT WILL PROVE USEFUL, I THINK
AND THIS RING IS YOUR REWARD, EREKOSÉ
I FEEL YOU NEEDED NO HELP, YOUNG MAN.
ON THE CONTRARY I DOUBT I HAVE EVER BEEN IN GREATER PERIL--
15

--OR HAD YOU NOT NOTICED THAT THE TREMBLING OF THE TOWER HAS GREATLY INCREASED?
RRMMBBL
BUT I NEED ONE LAST THING

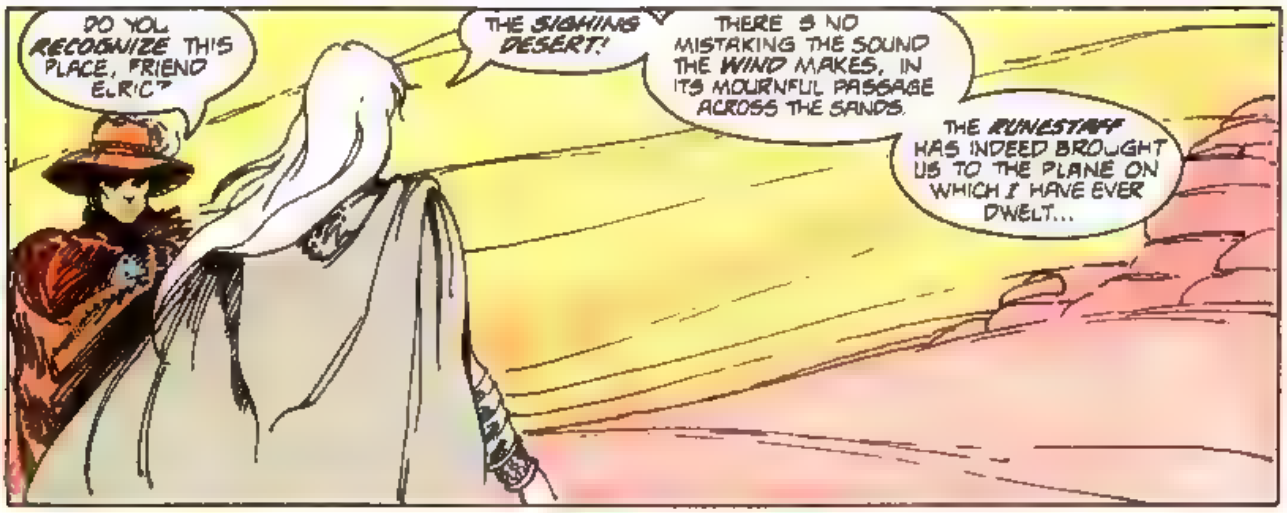
THE RUNESTAFF! DORIAN HAWKMOON HAD THIS WITH HIM WHEN I TRAVELED WITH HIM TO THE DARK EMPIRE
RUNESTAFF? HAWKMOON? DARK EMPIRE?
FORGIVE ME AS A COMPANION TO CHAMPIONS, I OFTEN FORGET THAT NOT ALL OF US HAVE MEMORIES OF OTHER CAREERS.

THE RUNESTAFF, IN ORDER TO EXIST, MUST EXERT A FIELD IN WHICH IT MAY CONTAIN ITSELF
DO NOT STEP OUTSIDE THAT FIELD, MY FRIENDS, OR YOU WILL BE CRUSHED BY THE CRUMBLING TOWER!


LET THE RUNESTAFF SEEK WHAT WE SEEK!
BLACKNESS ALL AROUND US-- YET THE SURFACE BENEATH OUR FEET CHANGES COLOR, FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT!
EVEN THE AIR--ONE MOMENT IT IS [illegible], THE NEXT COOL.
WE MOVE FROM PLANE TO PLANE OF THE UNIVERSE, NEVER SEEING MORE THAN A FEW FEET OF GROUND--AH, SAND!


JUMP!

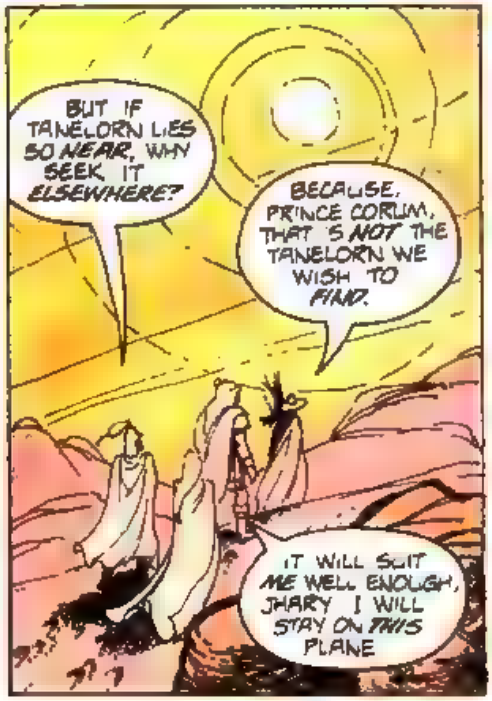
16

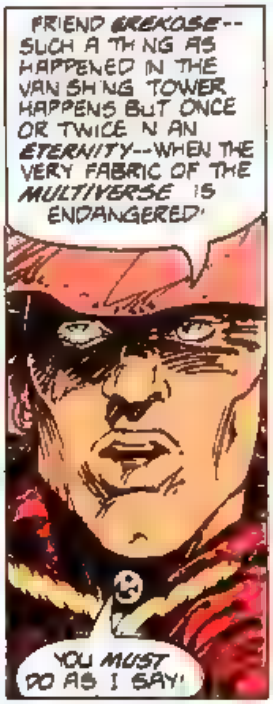

DO YOU RECOGNIZE THIS PLACE, FRIEND ELRIC?
THE SIGHING DESERT!
THERE IS NO MISTAKING THE SOUND THE WIND MAKES, IN ITS MOURNFUL PASSAGE ACROSS THE SANDS.
THE RUNESTAFF HAS INDEED BROUGHT US TO THE PLANE ON WHICH I HAVE EVER DWELT...

...BEFORE VANISHING BACK INTO THE SHADES OF LIMBO.

ARE YOU ALL TO COME WITH ME TO THE DEFENSE OF TANELORN?
NO WE MUST DESTROY THE LEB KAARNA'S DEVICE, SO NEITHER HE NOR HIS LIK MAY EVER USE IT AGAIN
WILL YOU LEAD US?

BUT I MUST GO TO TANELORN AT ONCE, BEFORE--
LESS THAN A DAY HAS PASSED HERE ELRIC THE MAGE AND HIS BEASTS CANNOT HAVE YET REACHED THE CITY
VERY WELL. I WILL TAKE YOU TO THE MACHINE.

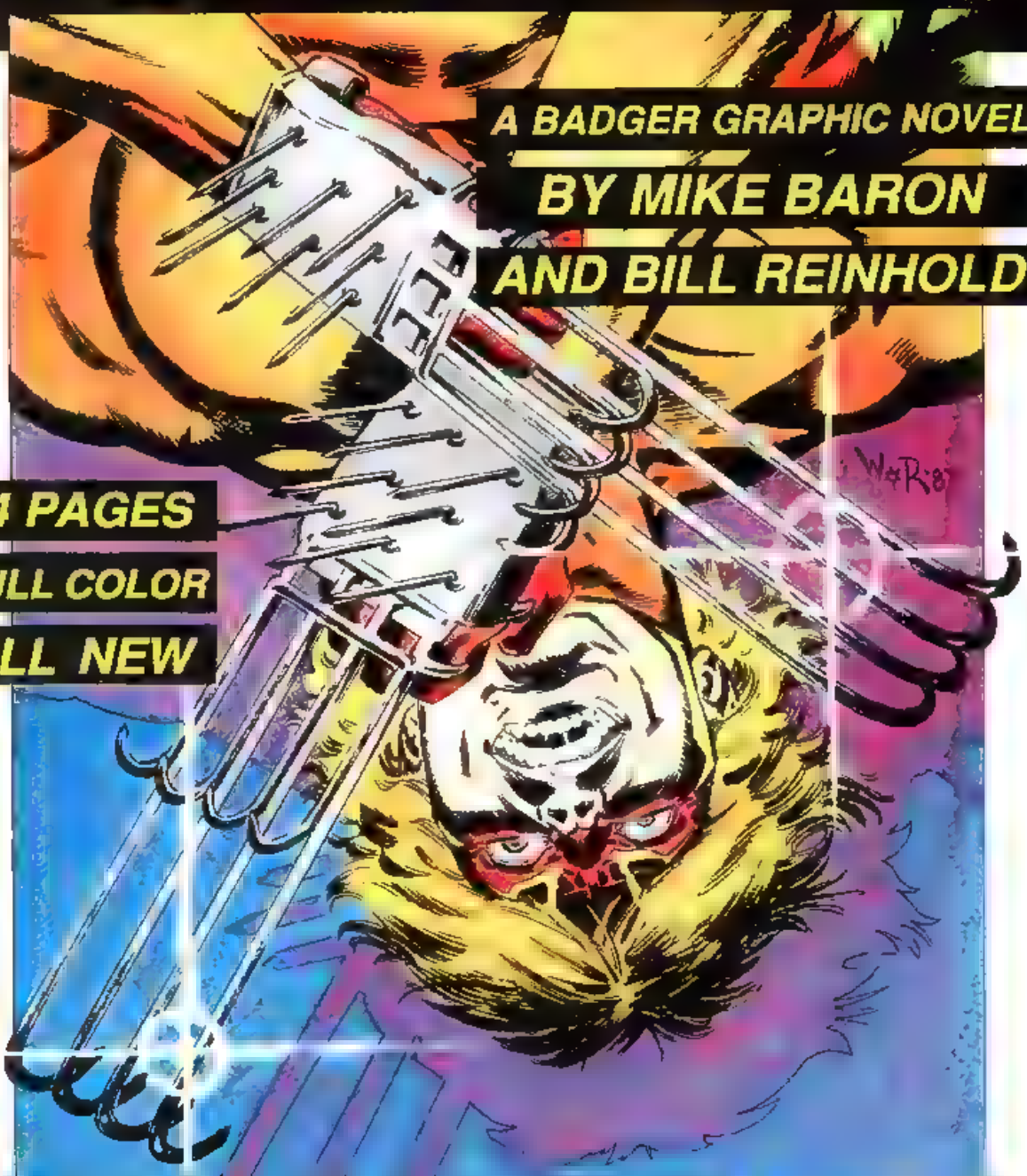

BUT IF TANELORN LIES SO NEAR, WHY SEEK IT ELSEWHERE?
BECAUSE, PRINCE CORUM, THAT IS NOT THE TANELORN WE WISH TO FIND.
IT WILL SUIT ME WELL ENOUGH, JHARY. I WILL STAY ON THIS PLANE


FRIEND EREKOSE--SUCH A THING AS HAPPENED IN THE VANISHING TOWER HAPPENS BUT ONCE OR TWICE IN AN ETERNITY--WHEN THE VERY FABRIC OF THE MULTIVERSE IS ENDANGERED!
YOU MUST DO AS I SAY!

I PROMISE YOU WILL HAVE JUST AS MUCH CHANCE OF FINDING TANELORN WHERE I TAKE YOU YOUR OPPORTUNITY LIES IN ELRIC'S FUTURE
OH...VERY WELL ALL THIS TALK OF WORLDS AND PLANES MAKES MY HEAD SPIN.

AMERICA'S NUMBER ONE PSYCHO IN HIS FIRST GRAPHIC NOVEL

HEXBREAKER



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AND BILL REINHOLD

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and exotic seafoods
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THE SIX ISSUE MINI-EPIC CONTINUES IN

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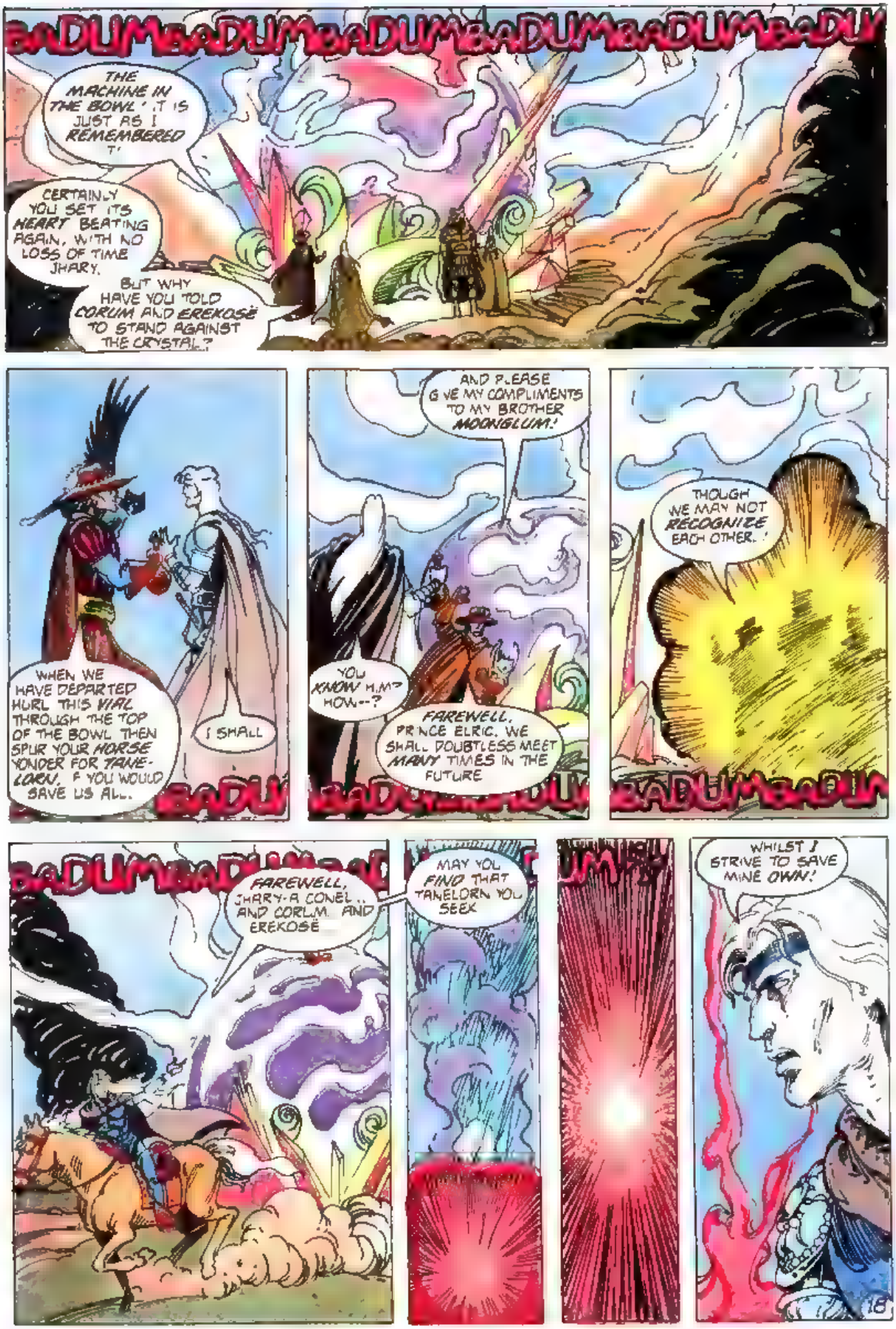
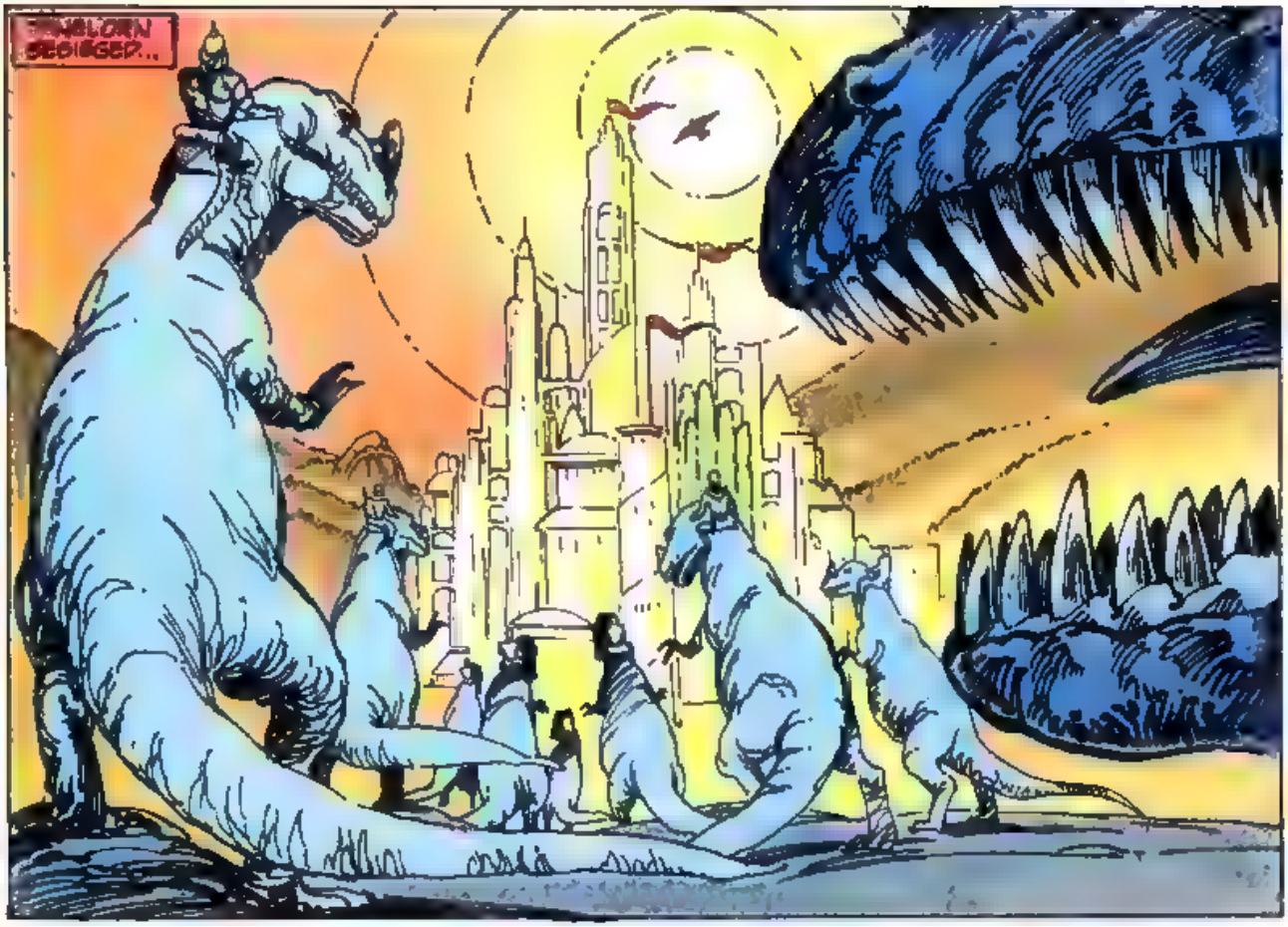
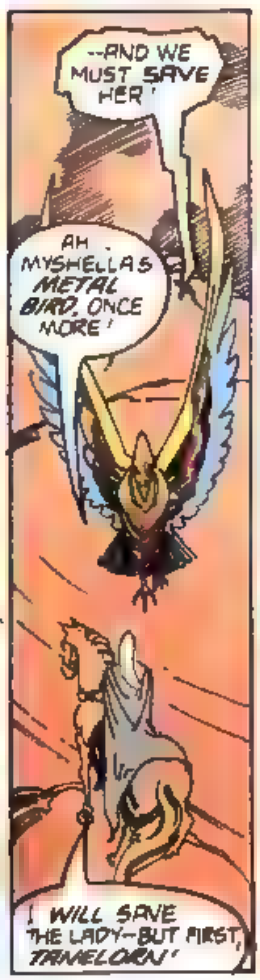

BADUMBADUMBADUMBADUMBADUMBADUMBADU
THE MACHINE IN THE BOWL'. IT IS JUST AS I REMEMBERED IT'
CERTAINLY YOU SET ITS HEART BEATING AGAIN, WITH NO LOSS OF TIME JHARY.
BUT WHY HAVE YOU TOLD CORUM AND EREKOSË TO STAND AGAINST THE CRYSTAL?
WHEN WE HAVE DEPARTED HURL THIS VIAL THROUGH THE TOP OF THE BOWL THEN SPUR YOUR HORSE YONDER FOR TANELORN, IF YOU WOULD SAVE US ALL.
I SHALL
AND PLEASE GIVE MY COMPLIMENTS TO MY BROTHER MOONGLUM!
YOU KNOW HIM? HOW--?
FAREWELL, PRINCE ELRIC. WE SHALL DOUBTLESS MEET MANY TIMES IN THE FUTURE
THOUGH WE MAY NOT RECOGNIZE EACH OTHER.'
BADUMBADUMBADUMBADUM
FAREWELL, JHARY-A CONEL.. AND CORUM. AND EREKOSË
MAY YOU FIND THAT TANELORN YOU SEEK
WHILST I STRIVE TO SAVE MINE OWN!
18


TANELORN BESIEGED..

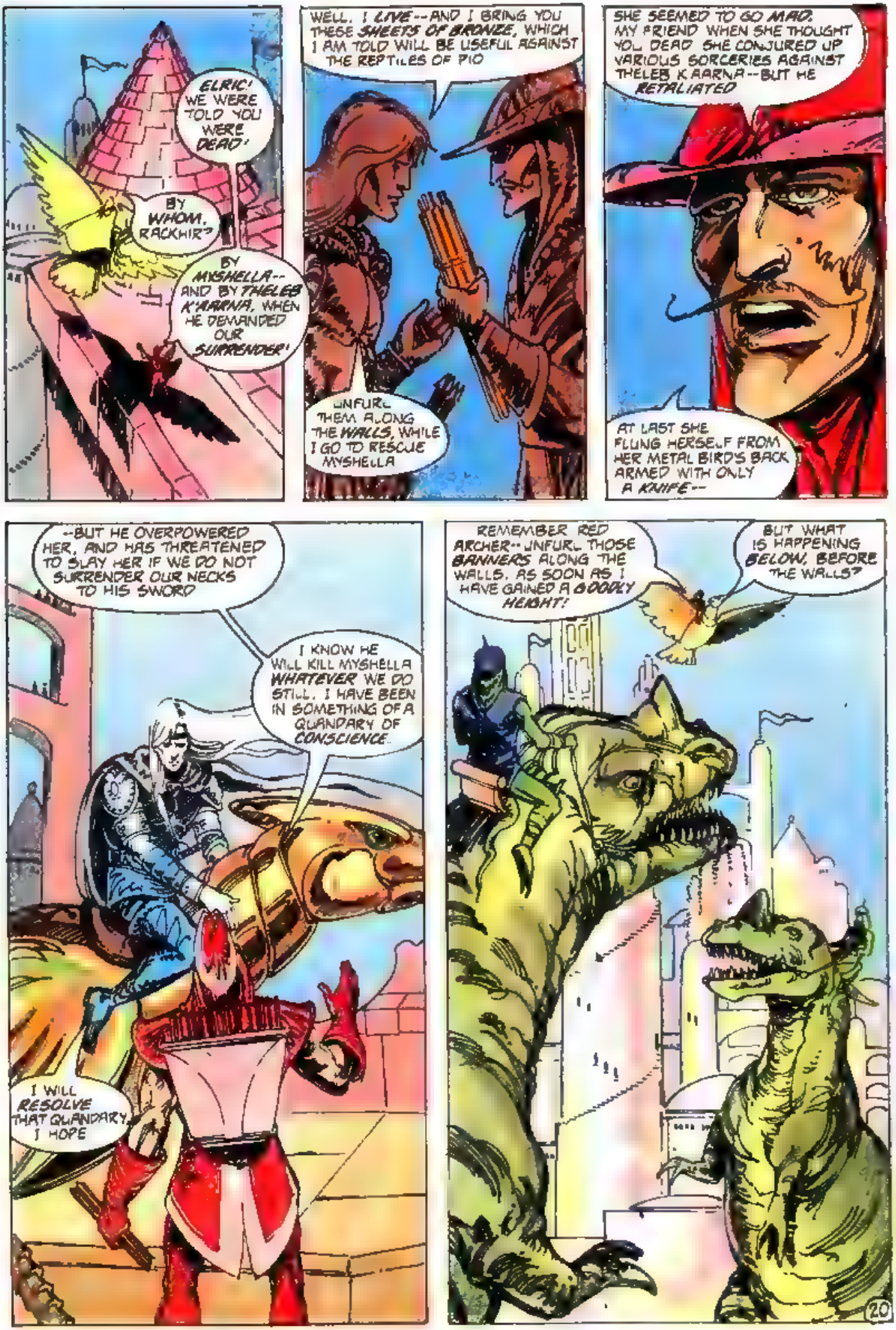
WELL, JHARY-A-CONEL WAS RIGHT AGAIN, WASN'T HE, HORSE?
THELEB'S MONSTERS ARE BARELY WITHIN SIGHT OF THE CITY'S WARRIOR MOUNTED WALLS AS I ARRIVE BEHIND THEM
THERE'S MY ARCH-FOE HIMSELF--

--BUT WHAT'S THAT DRAPED ACROSS HIS SADDLE?

IT IS MY LADY MYSHELLA, PRINCE ELRIC--
WHO--?

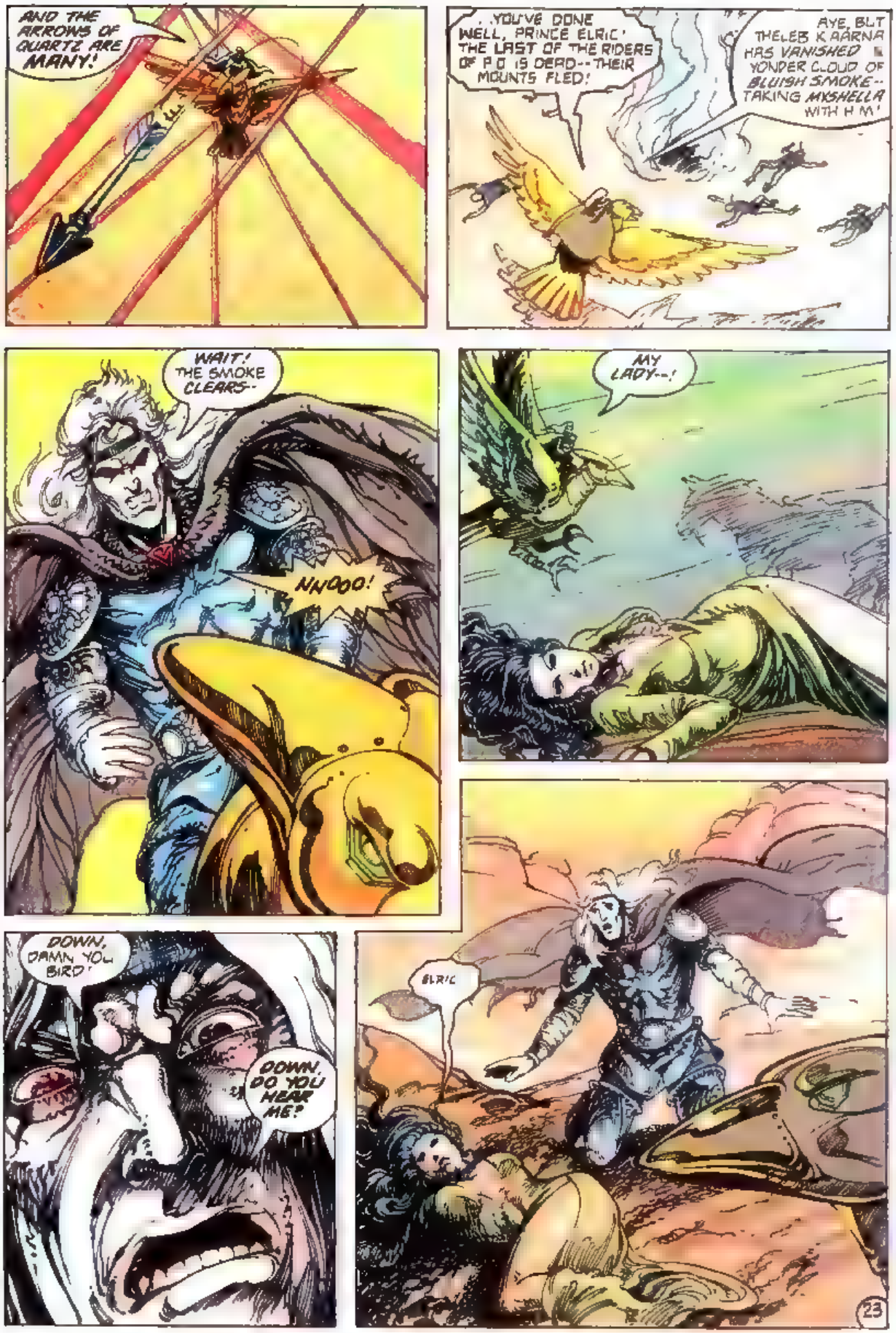

--AND WE MUST SAVE HER!
AH. MYSHELLA'S METAL BIRD, ONCE MORE!
I WILL SAVE THE LADY--BUT FIRST, TANELORN!

VERY WELL, THEN. I WILL HELP YOU.
CLIMB UP INTO MY SADDLE.
9

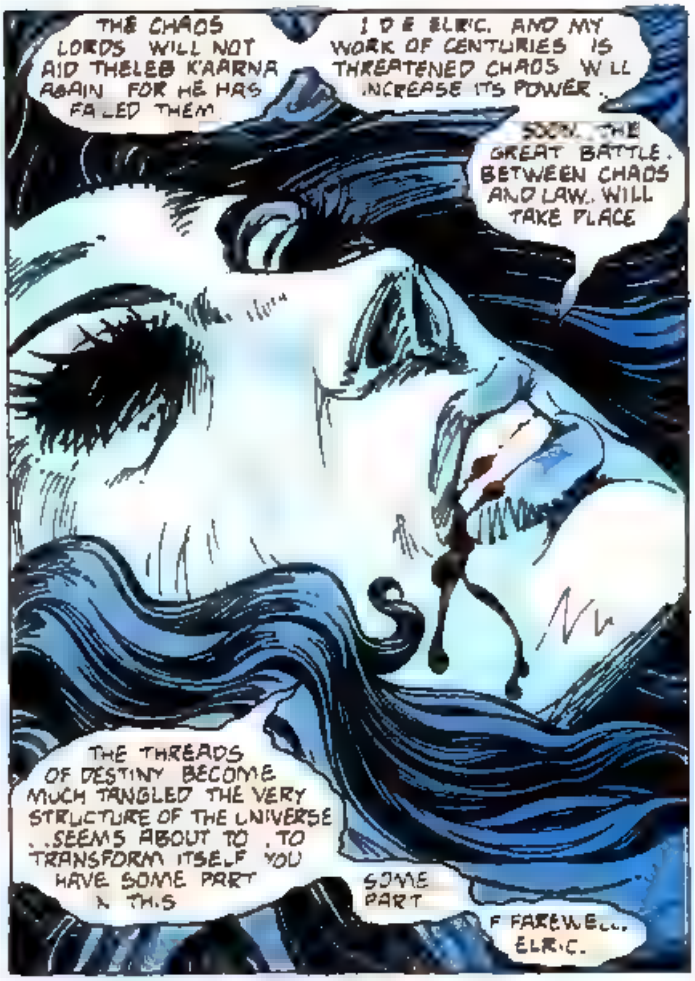

ELRIC! WE WERE TOLD YOU WERE DEAD!
BY WHOM, RACKHIR?
BY MYSHELLA--AND BY THELEB K'AARNA, WHEN HE DEMANDED OUR SURRENDER!
WELL, I LIVE--AND I BRING YOU THESE SHEETS OF BRONZE, WHICH I AM TOLD WILL BE USEFUL AGAINST THE REPTILES OF PIO
UNFURL THEM ALONG THE WALLS, WHILE I GO TO RESCUE MYSHELLA
SHE SEEMED TO GO MAD. MY FRIEND WHEN SHE THOUGHT YOU DEAD SHE CONJURED UP VARIOUS SORCERIES AGAINST THELEB K'AARNA--BUT HE RETALIATED
AT LAST SHE FLUNG HERSELF FROM HER METAL BIRD'S BACK ARMED WITH ONLY A KNIFE--
--BUT HE OVERPOWERED HER, AND HAS THREATENED TO SLAY HER IF WE DO NOT SURRENDER OUR NECKS TO HIS SWORD
I KNOW HE WILL KILL MYSHELLA WHATEVER WE DO STILL, I HAVE BEEN IN SOMETHING OF A QUANDARY OF CONSCIENCE
I WILL RESOLVE THAT QUANDARY, I HOPE
REMEMBER RED ARCHER--UNFURL THOSE BANNERS ALONG THE WALLS, AS SOON AS I HAVE GAINED A GOODLY HEIGHT!
BUT WHAT IS HAPPENING BELOW, BEFORE THE WALLS?
20

BY THE GODS-- HORSEMEN! THEY RODE OUT FROM TANELORN BEFORE RACKHIR COULD HALT THEM-
--AND NOW THEY ARE DEVOURED BY FLAMES FROM THE MONSTER'S HUGE JAWS!
FSSSSHH
AAAAAAAAA
YOU WILL PAY FOR THEIR DEATHS THELEB KAARNA
YOU!? BUT-- YOU ARE DEAD!
I AM ALIVE-- AND I COME TO DESTROY YOU, AT LONG LAST.
GIVE MYSHELLA UP TO ME!
NO! DESTROY ME-AND SHE DIES, AS WELL
BEINGS OF PIO! TURN YOUR FULL STRENGTH AGAINST TANELORN! RAZE IT UTTERLY--AND SHOW THIS FOOL WHAT WE CAN DO!
21

FOOOSSSH
WHAT IS THIS??
A VAST WALL OF GOLDEN LIGHT BLAZES OUT ALL ABOUT THE CITY--AND REPELS THE RIDERS FIRE!
IT IS IMPOSSIBLE! NO SORCERY ON EARTH CAN STAND AGAINST THE POWER OF PIO!
THIS IS NOT OUR WORLD'S SORCERY--
IT IS ANOTHER SORCERY--ONE WHICH CAN RESIST THAT OF PIO'
I COMMAND YOU AGAIN, THELEB K'AARNA--GIVE UP MISHELLA!
NEVER! YOU ARE NOT PROTECTED AS TANELORN IS'
DESTROY HIM'
THEN YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE, WIZARD--
--BUT TO USE THE ARROWS OF QUARTZ'
AARRRR
JHARY A-CONEL KNEW WHERE OF HE SPOKE' I HAVE BUT TO FLING THE ARROWS LIKE SPEARS--
--AND THEIR FORCE LEAVES ONE RIDER-LESS LIZARD BEFORE THE GATES OF ETERNAL TANELORN!
22


AND THE ARROWS OF QUARTZ ARE MANY!
. YOU'VE DONE WELL, PRINCE ELRIC! THE LAST OF THE RIDERS OF P'O IS DEAD--THEIR MOUNTS FLED!
AYE, BUT THELEB K'AARNA HAS VANISHED YONDER CLOUD OF BLUISH SMOKE--TAKING MYSHELLA WITH H'M!
WAIT! THE SMOKE CLEARS--
NNOOO!
MY LADY--!
DOWN, DAMN YOU BIRD!
DOWN, DO YOU HEAR ME?
ELRIC
23

CAN YOU LIVE, MY LADY? HAVE YOU NO POWER THAT--?
I AM SLAIN MY LOVE
NO! I WILL KILL THELEB K'AARNA FOR THIS!
BUT--DO NOT SPEAK CONSERVE YOUR STRENGTH
M-MUST SPEAK TELL YOU. THAT WHICH YOU WILL NEED TO KNOW..


THE CHAOS LORDS WILL NOT AID THELEB K'AARNA AGAIN FOR HE HAS FAILED THEM
I D E ELRIC. AND MY WORK OF CENTURIES IS THREATENED CHAOS WILL INCREASE ITS POWER..
SOON. THE GREAT BATTLE. BETWEEN CHAOS AND LAW. WILL TAKE PLACE
THE THREADS OF DESTINY BECOME MUCH TANGLED THE VERY STRUCTURE OF THE UNIVERSE ..SEEMS ABOUT TO .TO TRANSFORM ITSELF YOU HAVE SOME PART IN THIS
SOME PART
F FAREWELL ELRIC.

OH MYSHELLA
IS SHE--?
AYE

THEN I MUST TAKE HER BACK TO CASTLE KANELOON
WE SHALL NOT SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN PRINCE ELRIC

FOR MY DEATH SHALL FOLLOW CLOSELY UPON MY LADY MYSHELLA'S!
ELRIC ?
THE BANNERS YOU GAVE US HAVE VANISHED YOUR ARROWS, TOO BUT THEY HAVE DONE THEIR WORK WELL.
WILL YOU COME BACK WITH US NOW TO TANELORN?
TANELORN CANNOT GIVE ME PEACE RACKHIR.
I BELIEVE THAT TO BE TRUE BUT I HAVE A POTION WHICH WILL DEADEN SOME OF YOUR MEMORIES. HELP YOU FORGET SOME OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED OF LATE
I WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR SUCH A POTION
I AM SO WEARY OF THE GODS AND THEIR STRUGGLES MOONGLUM
BUT WHEN WILL THE GODS WEARY OF THEM ? I WONDER?
PERHAPS ALL OUR STRUGGLING, OUR SUFFERING OUR CONFLICTS ARE MERELY TO RELIEVE THE BOREDOM OF THE LORDS OF THE HIGHER WORLDS
PERHAPS--
ELRIC?
DAMN YOU GODS! DAMN YOU ALL!
LET HIM BE MOONGLUM HE CURSES THE GODS

. BUT HE KNOWS THAT IT IS ELRIC OF MELNIBONÉ HIMSELF WHO IS TRULY ACCURSED
DAMN YOU
The End

Melnibonéan Mailbox!

435 N. LASALLE, CHICAGO, IL 60610

Dear Laurel,

What I've seen of Jan Duursema's artwork so far is pretty good, in fact she's my second favourite female comic book artist (I'll give you one guess as to how many of the comics I'm currently reading are drawn by women Like to hazard a guess as to who my favourite female comic book artist is? You've had clues in the past.) She certainly does a great job of evoking our hero's warm, sunny disposition, at any rate. And I'm glad she's sticking to P. Craig Russell's original character designs — a darn sight more closely than Michael T. Gilbert ever did. Observant readers might wonder why her depiction of Myshella is totally different from Gilbert & Freeman's... but there's a perfectly good reason for that!

Okay, having established that the art is good (the colouring ain't bad either, Lovern...) how about the script? Um. Well, having used lots of descriptive captions in his previous adaptations, Roy seems to have abandoned them almost completely in favour of dialogue. I honestly don't see any reason for this sudden change of style, especially since it makes for a lot of unnatural sounding speeches, such as Elric's at the bottom of Tower #1, page 21, which doesn't appear as dialogue in the story. Worse still, the characters — usually Elric — frequently describe what the readers can see for themselves: "Like a great fanged whale with wings!," "An emerald-eyed bird of sliver and gold and brass!," etc. Thereby violating what I consider to be a cardinal rule of comic scripting: only describe what *isn't* immediately obvious! And don't have characters speaking huge expository lumps which could be better presented as omniscient narration. And don't have characters talking to themselves when a thought-bubble would do better... (Next: how to teach grandmother to suck eggs.)

Another for instance: it's definitely out of charcter for the metal bird to ask Elric how he feels (#2, pg 14) since in the original it shows a brazen *(ahem)* disregard for Elric's feelings — except that it's necessary for Thomas to establish that Elric feels nauseous, and in the absence of captions it's the only way he can do so. As usual, most of the best dialogue is straight from Moorcock. Thomas inserts one or two additional clunkers of his own (e.g. "Why do I get the feeling you never listen to me?" Moonglum goes to Hollywood!!) although he does occasionally come up with a new line which is neither forced or cliched. "If I can stand the torture of merely living, conjurer, what other pain could ever affright me?" (#2, pg 24). My only quibble with that one is that "affright" is a bit too archaic, like "neath" and "mayhap," none of which Moorcock ever uses. 'Mayhap' Thomas thinks that by archaising (is that a word? Well, you know what it means, anyway). Moorcock's dialogue he'll lend it a greater air of authenticity, but if so he's quite definitely wrong, forsooth! I think Moorcock's style is fine just the way it is.

As always, I hope these criticisms wil be taken in the spirit in which they're intended — whatever spirit that may be.

Lee Mendham
19 Chalk Pit Hill
Chatham, Kent
United Kingdom ME4 5TA

Thanks for writing — and just who is your favorite female aritst?

Dear Laurel, Inc.,

After a rather stern diet of WaRP Graphics Elfquest (good art, no color) and Robotech (good color, no art), in a very out of the way, very tiny comic shop only open twice a week, on top of a very high shelf I found Elric: The

"In a very out of the way, very tiny comic shop only open twice a week, on top of a very high shelf I found Elric: The Vanishing Tower #4... Oooo! What else is there to say?"

Vanishing Tower #4...
Oooo!
What else is there to say?

Catriona Tyson
16/26 Sketty Raiod
Uplands
Abertawe SA2 0LL

Welcome aboard. I hope your name and address are correct, which leads me onto a complete tangent — I would like to print everyone's correct name and address, but if your signature is as twisted as mine, it may not be legible. Please PRINT both at the end of your letters. If you'd prefer not to have your address published, just say so, we'll be happy to oblige, but it's nice knowing where your letters originated.

Dear Chronicle-ers of the Black Sword,

Let me start by saying that I am a swords-and-sorcery fan (a Michael Moorcock fan particularly), and that comics have never particularly interested me until recently. I am sixteen years old and I've been heavily into Moorcock since I was about 12. (I have now collected over forty of his books.)

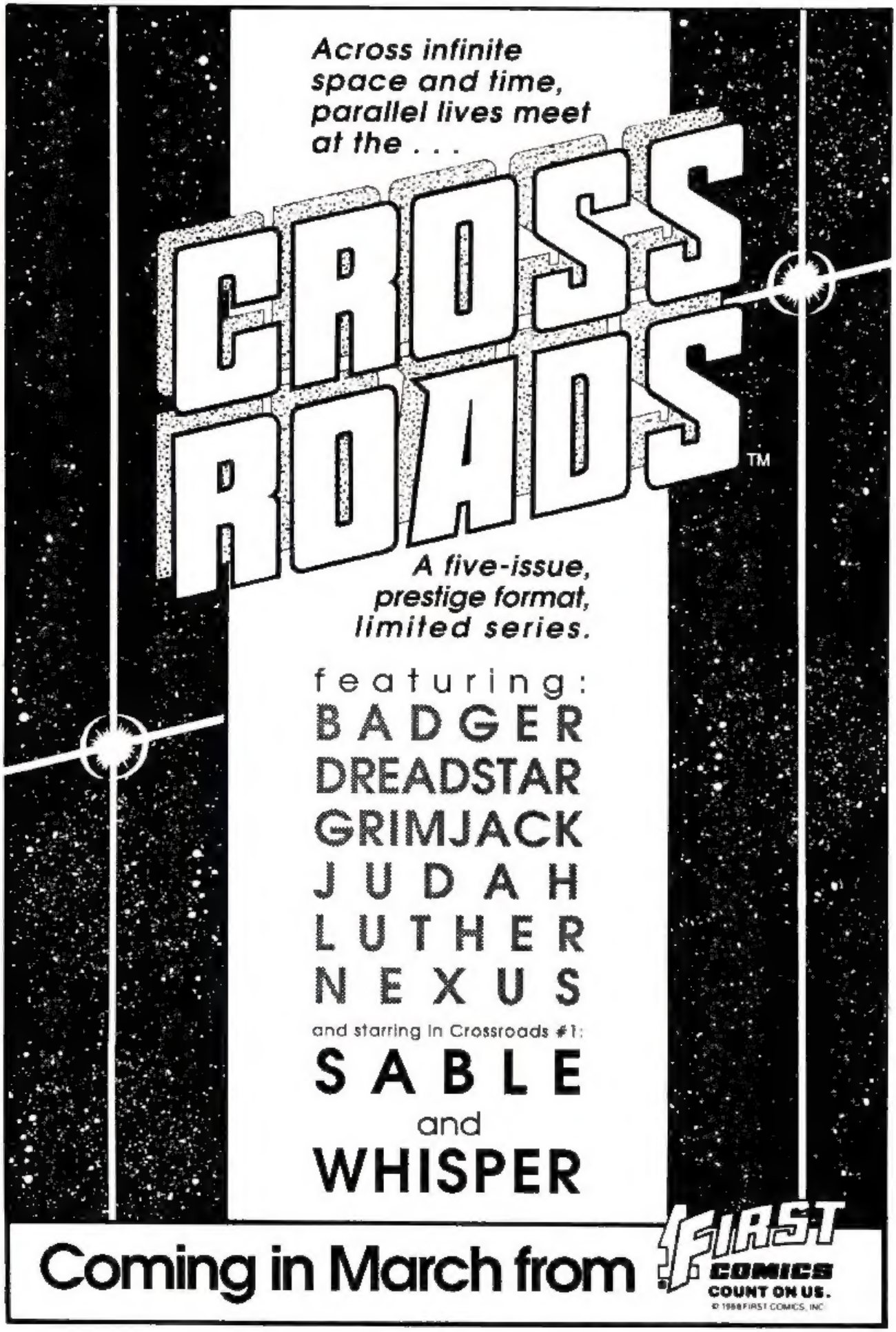
About four months ago I saw a copy of P.C. Russell and M.T. Gilbert's graphic novel, Elric of Melniboné. I liked the artists' styles, but didn't like theirportrayalof the characters; so I forgot about it. A while later I dropped by a comic shop that had moved to a local mall and was shocked to find not only a new Elric series but Corum and Hawkmoon as well. Instantly addicted, I have bought every issue of all three since then, plus acquiring a large number of back issues. Duursema's art is spectacular, particularly her portrayal of the Doomed Lord himself. He is noble, graceful, and slightly ethereal — but not at all feminine. And she gives him just the right sinister touch. As for Moonglum and Yyrkoon, I don't know where Stan Corwyn got the idea that Moonglum had a beard — it is not mentioned at all in the entire series; in fact, he is described as shaving on page 36 of "The Vanishing Tower." However, the clean-cut good-looks portrayed by Jan doesn't fit the rascally, scruffy little imp described by Moorcock on pg. 89 of "The Weird of the White Wolf." Yyrkoon, of course, is all wrong; he is supposed to have long, oiled, wavy black locks. I don't recall a beard being mentioned in his case, either, but I could be wrong there. Anyway, I hope to acquire the entire Elric series to date if possible, and I hope you continue the series all the way through "Stormbringer."

By the way, Roy Thomas, you rule!

Shiloh
80 N. 2nd Street Pike
Churchville, PA 18966

NEXT ISSUE: We begin our next adaptation, "The Bane of the Black Sword," and welcome new penciller **Mark Pacella** and inker **Nicholas Koenig** — and as always **Roy Thomas** leads the way.

— Laurel Fitch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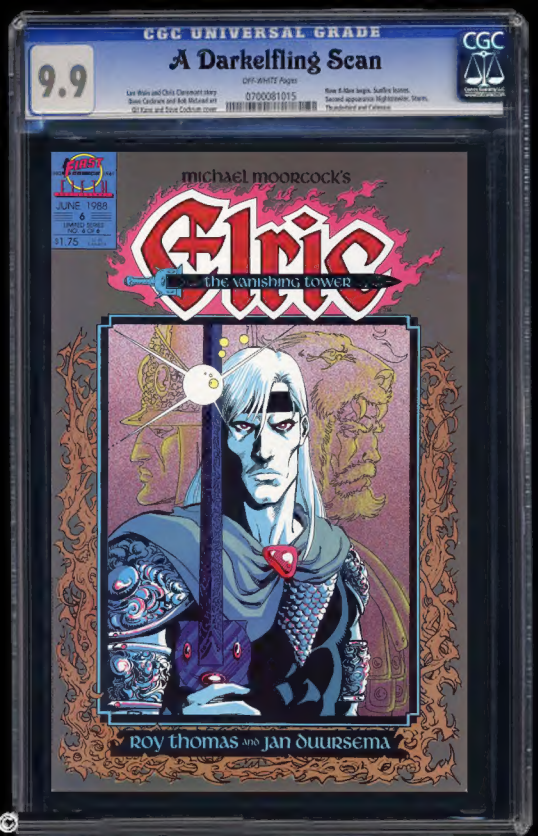

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